



# Diamond Street Early Childhood Center



## FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025-2026 School Year



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# Who We Are

**Diamond Street Early Childhood Center (DSECC)** is an independent 501c3 non-profit charitable organization that grew out of the Christian education mission of the Akron Mennonite Church (AMC). We serve our community and honor the mission of AMC by providing high quality early childhood care and education to children from 6 weeks of age through 4<sup>th</sup> grade during various programs throughout the school year and summer break.

DSECC is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our staff work to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support necessary to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Relationship building is our most important daily activity. Strong relationships are the basis for developing good habits and behaviors that are safe, helpful, and kind. All children learn best from people they know and love and who know and love them.

Thoughtful and intentional care go into designing our environment, developing lesson plans and creating schedules that place relationships first, help prevent problems from developing and encourage learning readiness. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving helps children develop their ability to self-regulate. We encourage children to keep themselves and others safe, show kindness to everyone and take care of both their own and shared property. These guidelines are the basis for all of our center wide and classroom specific rules which guide the children to grow into their best selves.

**Vision:** We envision a community where Early Childhood Education is valued; families and teachers are supported; and children reach their full potential.

**Mission:** Our mission is to support our community by providing nurturing, safe, educational childcare that emphasizes the worth and uniqueness of each child.

## **Values:**

**Integrity** - We seek to follow Christ's example, creating an environment that empowers each individual to do the right thing.

**Respect** - We value each individual, accepting them for who they are and recognizing their strengths.

**Collaboration** -We welcome each person's ideas and perspectives. Staff and families share expertise, information and resources to work towards a common goal.

**Inclusion** - We recognize and embrace the diversity of personalities, backgrounds, social experiences, races, and religions that makes each of us unique.

**Kindness** -We use our thoughts, words, and actions to encourage and uplift each other. We look for the best in everyone and everything, seeking peaceful interactions and conflict resolution in all relationships.

**Excellence** - We commit to the continual pursuit of the highest standards in Early Childhood Education. We successfully engage students in learning on their level and in their unique way.

**Philosophy of Learning Readiness and Student Success:** At DSECC, children experience learning through play and grow in their social-emotional, physical, and

cognitive development. Families will feel supported and nurtured through staff efforts to support each individual child.

There are many sources of toxic stress in our community that can affect the wellbeing of children in our care. While toxic stress is not present in the lives of all of our children, the resiliency skills that we teach and the steps we take to ensure children are ready to learn will provide a stable foundation for all children. Staff will be trained to watch for learning readiness before expecting students to engage in learning opportunities such as circle time or small groups where it is necessary for children to self-regulate to pay attention to what is being taught. Supports ensure that if dysregulation occurs, students can work alongside a trained and caring teacher to return to a state of learning readiness.

Children enrolled in our programs will gain competence in peaceful conflict resolution, appreciation of diversity, and respect for others through an environment of cooperation and compassion. Teachers are valued for the important contribution they make to a child's learning and development each day. Teachers are required to take professional development trainings throughout the year to assist with the ongoing requirements and regulations of the PA Department of Health and PA Keystone STARS but also to ensure that they are competent at meeting the ever-changing needs of children in our care.

Principles of a peaceful classroom:

- Friendship: association, conversation, belonging

- Compassion: recognition of emotions, problem solving, expression

- Cooperation: consideration of others, negotiation

- Kindness: caretaking, gentleness, generosity, and encouragement

Principles of learning readiness:

- Feelings of safety: an open and welcoming environment

- Thoughtful interactions: calm response to the unexpected

- Relationship building: trust is built because teachers care about students

- Predictable routines: children thrive when they know what to expect

- Celebrate small success: every child can be successful in some way every day

### **Philosophy of Appreciation and Care of Our Natural World:** DSECC

believes that the experience of nature is essential to children's wellbeing. We strive to provide deep meaningful experiences for children at a developmentally appropriate level consistently and throughout the year. Children will grow to know, understand, and care for the natural world around them as the natural world in turn helps them learn to regulate their bodies and minds. We will care for God's creation as he cares for us.

**Philosophy of Faith Development:** DSECC strives to provide a Christian environment constant with the Anabaptist mission of Akron Mennonite Church. Here children experience God's love through the warmth, respect and acceptance modeled by our teachers. Children learn peacemaking skills through experience and intentional teaching as we guide them in social-emotional development. Bible stories are told to encourage each child's sense of wonder and to help them understand our world. Teachers model both reverence in mealtime prayer and the joy we imagine Christ experienced when he interacted with children.

**Licensing and Quality Control:** DSECC is licensed through the State under the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). We maintain licensing through annual State inspections to ensure compliance and regular internal reviews. Our quality control is overseen by the PA Keys STARS. Currently DSECC has achieved and maintains a STAR 4

rating, which is the highest possible rating under this program. For more information regarding the PA Keys STARS program, visit [pakeys.org](http://pakeys.org).

**Governance, Leadership and Staff:** DSECC is overseen by a Board of Directors made up of AMC members, community members and family representatives. Board members are prayerfully selected for their roles and chosen based on the experience and talents they bring to the Center.

The Board of Directors carefully selects an Executive Director to oversee the programs and operations of DSECC. The Executive Director in turn selects a leadership team of individuals based on their experience, talents and commitment to the learning and care philosophies of DSECC. This team of Directors selects, trains, and guides the teaching and support staff that are responsible for the direct care of children and the daily management of classrooms, lessons and activities.

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

| Position Title    | Education/Certification                                                                                               | Experience         |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Teacher           | Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or higher education degree<br>Or Child Development Associate Credential | 2 years<br>3 years |
| Assistant Teacher | Child Development Associate Credential<br>Or high school diploma                                                      | 1 year<br>2 years  |
| Classroom Aide    | High school diploma                                                                                                   |                    |
| Student Intern    | Participant in Early Childhood Education program                                                                      |                    |

Teachers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

As part of their terms of employment, employees of DSECC may not accept paid work from participating families as it creates a conflict of interest. Any arrangement between families and our staff is a violation of terms of hire for Diamond Street Early Childhood Center and may jeopardize the staff member's employment.

## Program Descriptions:

**Infant Childcare:** Childcare begins at DSECC as early as 6 weeks old. We have two classrooms dedicated to infants; the Warblers is for our older infants and the Chickadees for our younger infants. Both rooms are led by a skilled and dedicated lead teacher who expertly juggles the infants' individual schedules filled with exploration, mealtimes, rest, and adventure. Planned activities are adapted to meet the individual needs of each child and every day holds opportunities to go outside in safe weather.

**Toddler Childcare:** As children are ready to move up from our infant level of care, they will begin in the Bluebirds classroom. This transition happens when the child no longer needs bottles, is using a sippy cup at mealtimes, has begun to walk and takes only one nap per day. Typically, all of these milestones will have been met by 18 months, but we are flexible and allow each child to reach readiness on their own schedule. The next transition is to our older toddler rooms between the ages of 2 and 3 years. The Robin and Dove rooms focus on building communication skills, self-help skills and toilet training. Both toddler rooms run on a single schedule to establish a predictable routine that allows the children to thrive. Activities are based around the overall interests of the classroom and adapted to meet the needs of individual

students. Outdoor time varies between one hour and three hours daily depending on the outdoor conditions and the needs of the children.

**Preschool/Prekindergarten:** Once potty training has been established, children transition to the preschool rooms: Hummingbirds, Puffins, Orioles and Cardinals. This transition brings active teaching in academic subjects to accompany the social-emotional and self-help learning. It is important to note that academics is not the focus of our play-based learning, but the knowledge of basic literacy, math, science, and social studies is expertly woven into the daily activities by our lead teachers. Daily schedules and lessons are created to enhance curiosity and build a love of learning. Children at this age will spend between two and five hours outside daily (weather permitting). Learning continues in our outdoor space through thoughtfully designed play centers. As the children grow, they get ready for kindergarten through activities focused on building independence and basic academic competence. Lead teachers retain all the play-based learning and build more structure into the day. Focus remains on social emotional growth that supports self-regulation and problem-solving skills to ensure a lifelong learning foundation.

**Pre-K Counts (PKC):** PKC is a State funded preschool program for children ages 3 to 5.

Families must qualify through an income-based application process for their children to attend the program. It runs on the same schedule as PA K-12 schools requiring 180 days of instruction and a 6-hour day. For more information about PKC visit

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Early%20Learning/OCDEL%20Preschool%20Programs/Pages/default.aspx>

**School Age Childcare (SACC):** Children who are in kindergarten to fourth grade in the Ephrata Area School District may enroll in before/after school care at our Center. The Center will provide staff to ensure that your child arrives at the Akron Elementary bus stop for pick up (before school) and drop off (after school) in a timely manner. Additionally, we provide van transportation for up to 9 children to attend Fulton Elementary. Families with students attending other schools are welcome to enroll but must provide their own transportation. Families needing care for non-school days only may also enroll for those days exclusively. Please note that before and after care is a school year only program which begins and ends following the Ephrata Area School District Calendar. Students must be enrolled in summer camp separately.

**School Age Summer Camp:** Summer day-camp is for children who have finished kindergarten through fourth grade. The program is high interest and high energy with regular field trips to community organizations and attractions. Children are divided up into mixed age camp crews. They are guided by counselors who match the children's energy and enthusiasm. Days are filled with constant activity including crafts, sports, STEM, free play and outdoor time. Students must register separately for Summer Camp and SACC.

# The School Year

**School Year Calendar:** Families are provided with a School Calendar in their enrollment packet. This calendar lists the first and last days of the school year, center-wide special activities, parent meetings, holidays, and days the Center is closed. The 2025-26 school year runs from August 25, 2025 to June 4, 2026. All dates and activities are subject to change. Please also carefully read the information sent out in weekly family communication emails. We are closed annually for: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Friday, Christmas Eve through New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day and Independence Day. Additional closing for in-service days may include Columbus Day, Election Day(s), Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Easter Monday, the day after school ends, and one or more days during the final week of the summer program (consult this year's calendar for in-service days).

## Hours of Operation:

Childcare and preschool services including wrap care are provided from 7:00AM to 5:30PM Monday through Friday.

Pre-K Counts is in session from 9:00AM to 3:00PM following the DSECC School Year Calendar. Before/After School Care is open for grades K-4 from 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM / 3:40 PM to 5:30 PM following the EASD calendar. Transportation is provided by EASD to and from Akron Elementary. Transportation to Fulton Elementary School is provided by DSECC.

**Admission and Enrollment:** Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 weeks of age to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. If space is not available for immediate enrollment, families may be added to a waiting list and contacted when a spot becomes available. To be added to our waiting list, families must fill out the pre-application paperwork on our website and go through the interview process. See program descriptions for categories of enrollment. All admission and enrollment forms must be completed. Registration fees and first tuition must be paid prior to your child's first day of attendance. Outstanding required forms, including DHS required vaccination records and health assessments will delay the start of care. An enrollment fee of \$75 per family is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable and is due only once for each family. If a family disenrolls all children for one year or longer, a new enrollment fee will apply. Children are admitted to DSECC without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided. (See our inclusion policy for more information)

**Tuition, Fees, and Credits:** Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the *Childcare Application and Agreement Form*. Payment for this contracted schedule is listed on the agreement form and required every week for the duration of enrollment whether or not your child attends, with the exception of pre-arranged free day credits and the week between Christmas and New Years. This enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year.

Visit the parent tool kit on our website, [www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org) for current tuition, fees, and credits.

Extended time fees will be charged when a family exceeds the number of hours in their contract. Tuition covers 9.5 hours per day for part-time families and 48 hours per week for full-time families.



Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$20 plus \$2 per minute will be assessed beginning at 5:30 PM.

**Repeated late pick up may result in childcare services being terminated.**

In the event of a classroom closure due to illness (such as COVID-19) or maintenance problems (such as a lack of functioning toilets), families will be credited the number of days that they did not receive care. Closures due to weather conditions will not be credited.

Families will receive annual **free days** for each child in the number of days matching their per week contract plus one. For example, if a child is enrolled for two days per week, they will receive three free days to use between the first and last day of the program their child attends. Free days do not accumulate or roll over and cannot be transferred to another child.

If a child will be absent from care for an extended period of time (one week or longer) due to an exclusionary illness, a family emergency or in the event of the birth or placement of another child to the family, a **hold fee** of one fifth tuition will be charged to maintain the child's spot.

Documentation of the reason for the leave may be required for the hold rate to apply.

All payment and fee processing will be completed by the Student Enrollment Coordinator. The Student Enrollment Coordinator will oversee collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact Angie, [angie@diamondstreet.org](mailto:angie@diamondstreet.org).

**Scholarships:** All families are encouraged to apply for scholarships at DSECC during their initial enrollment and annually in May/June for the following year. We acknowledge that there is a gap in funding for childcare resulting in middle income families struggling to access high quality care and early education. DSECC participates in three scholarship programs to help make it possible for all families to enroll in DSECC programs.

Funds are awarded based on qualifications and need on an annual basis and families must reapply each year for continued participation. Funds are limited and families may be placed on a waiting list. If additional funds are released, families will be awarded based on qualifications and need. Those who have turned in complete applications will be considered first and in the order the complete application is received.

Families receiving scholarships will receive written notice of the amount and stipulations of the scholarship.

**Payments:** Tuition is due by Friday at 5:00pm for the following week. Payments are always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather. **If permanent or temporary changes to a child's schedule are needed after the initial enrollment, two weeks' notice is required to ensure that classrooms can plan for this change and correct tuition rates are charged.** Emergency changes can be made at the discretion of the Student Enrollment Coordinator.

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by exact cash, check, automatic electronic funds transfer or credit card. To set up automatic, reoccurring payments, please contact the Student Enrollment Coordinator.

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$25. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status. Childcare services will be suspended or terminated after two consecutive weeks of nonpayment.

**Introduction and Transition:** Families will attend an enrollment appointment with the Student Enrollment Coordinator who will walk them through the required paperwork. A packet of information will be given to the family that will include classroom information. An optional



getting-to-know-you meeting may be set up with the child's classroom teacher one to five days prior to the child's first day. This meeting is free, should last no longer than 1 hour and the family is expected to stay for the duration.

Your child's transition into childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced. On the child's first day, the family should bring all necessary items and plan for a short goodbye.

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program. DSECC transitions students as a group between the school year and summer programs and again at the beginning of the next school year. If a child needs to transition at a time other than these, their teacher will recommend this to the directors and parents so that a plan can be made to meet the child's needs.

**Attendance:** If your child is going to be absent or arrive significantly later than their normal arrival time, please notify us by calling 717 859 4272, messaging via the ProCare app or emailing the Student Enrollment Coordinator. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

Students enrolled in Pre-K Counts at DSECC are considered full-time and must attend 5 days per week from 9:00am- 3:00pm following the DSECC calendar. Teachers or administrative staff will contact families after three consecutive days of absence to offer support as needed. DSECC will meet with families to discuss reasons for absences and ways to support consistent attendance. Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (18 days total) and have not responded to the program supports must be dismissed from the Pre-K Counts program.

Doctors' notes may be required as submission for absences to count as excusable.

**Emergency Closing:** Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water, illness outbreak) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on WGAL 8. Notifications will be sent via ProCare Messaging App and Email.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange. Some programs may implement make up days for closures as appropriate.

**Statewide Health Emergency:** In the event of a need to respond to a state or national health alert, DSECC will follow the protocol of Ephrata Area School District. The Center will remain open until the office of the Governor or the Akron Borough office dictates that it must close. If there are staffing concerns, classrooms will be combined as much as possible, while maintaining appropriate staff to child ratios. When that is not possible, the center will close until it is possible again. Reopening information will be forthcoming, and families will be notified as to when to return. This procedure may be amended by future Department of Human Services announcements.

**Withdraw of Student/Termination of Services:** Children may be withdrawn at any time with written notification. Two weeks' notice or two weeks of tuition is required. DSECC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate services provided to a child based on the occurrence of events such as lack of cooperation by the families with established rules or

procedures or if the center cannot guarantee the safety of the child, other children, or staff. For more information see the Suspension/Expulsion Policy.

DSECC reserves the right to terminate services to a child based on the occurrence of certain events such as a lack of cooperation from the family regarding established rules or procedures or non-payment of tuition and fees.

**Curriculum and Learning Environment:** The Creative Curriculum® is rooted in educational philosophy and theory as well as practice. It incorporates a community approach to learning and building on positive relationships, interactions, and exploration. The Creative Curriculum® is built on the development of young children learning through play within their environment. The Creative Curriculum® recognizes that by continually changing and enriching the environment, teachers can support learning and creativity in children. Children's creativity is supported by an environment that encourages them to try out ideas and to risk making mistakes. Our teacher's creativity is supported by a curriculum framework that encourages them to be innovative and responsive to children's individual goals.

The Creative Curriculum® allows teachers to integrate learning through literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology throughout the day. It also gives teachers a wide range of teaching strategies– from child-initiated learning to teacher-directed approaches– to best respond to children's learning styles, strengths, and interests.

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

**Assessment and Developmental Screening:** The Ages and Stages

Questionnaire is used as a developmental screening tool for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. New children are assessed approximately 45 days after their entry into the program. After your child's first 45 days at DSECC, you will receive an invitation to meet with your child's teacher to discuss the results of the screening. In some cases, the teacher may provide a home assessment to accompany the one from the classroom as children may display different strengths in a home setting. Having families fill out a screening questionnaire will help provide a more complete picture of the child's milestones and inform how we structure their day to meet their needs.

Information gathered through the Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening may be used to provide information necessary to refer a child for further assessment if the classroom teacher and the family feel an outside assessment is appropriate. It is also used to help teachers learn more about each child, build a program based on the children's interests and ensure that each child is given an opportunity to learn to the best of their abilities.

School-age students will receive a 45-day service report that details observations on their strengths and challenges within our setting. While no formal conferences are in place for school-age students, any concerns that families or staff have about a child's progress or placement may be discussed at any time of year.

DSECC uses Teaching Strategies Gold, which is directly tied to the Creative Curriculum to assess children's ongoing progress. Ongoing authentic observations and assessments of children's developmental progress happen regularly at DSECC. An authentic assessment is defined as a process of using ongoing observations from multiple sources to provide a well-rounded picture of the child's capabilities. Children are observed in a naturalistic environment

throughout the day, observed across many routines and in daily learning experiences. The information is used to create individual goals for each child.

Conferences will be held three times per year. We strongly encourage families to make time for at least two conferences annually. All assessments are confidential records and will be maintained in the child's file in accordance with our confidentiality policy. Families may request a copy of this information at any time. Records may also be transferred to another institution with a written request from parents.

## **Your Child's Day:**

**What to Bring:** Each classroom will have specific requests for each child based on age and program needs. These will be listed in the classroom packet provided to you at your enrollment appointment. All enrolled children will need:

- Required medications in their original container with prescribing information and the child's name. Over the counter medications such as diaper cream, lotion or sunscreen must be in their original container with the child's name written on them. (See Medication Policy)
- Clothing and closed-toed shoes appropriate for the child's needs.
- Comfort items for rest time
- Water bottle or cup with lid (bottles for infant feeding)

**Arrival:** We open at 7:00 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them into the Center at the sign in station by the main entrance **and** the classroom. Pre-K Counts classrooms open at 9:00AM. Children may not arrive early unless they are enrolled in wrap care.

As children arrive, they will be greeted by the teachers and integrated into the classroom activities at their own pace allowing the child to express their needs. Parents should plan to leave quickly to ease this transition.

**Schedule and Activities:** Individual classroom teachers will provide each family with a calendar of events, curriculum topics and activities that are scheduled throughout the year. Take advantage of the information provided to engage in conversation with your child about what they are learning and experiencing throughout their day. Daily schedules will be posted in each classroom and included in the classroom packet you receive during enrollment.

**Meals:** At mealtime children's plates are pre-portioned and each child is given every menu item unless a substitute is required (see nutrition policy). Children and teachers sit and eat together as mealtimes are an important social learning experience and are considered part of active instructional time. Teachers model appropriate table manners and encourage children to become self-sufficient. Our goal is to provide children with a well-balanced, tasty meal in an atmosphere where they will want to try all the foods we offer. Children are not required to try everything or "clean their plate". Seconds will be offered to everyone until a food item is gone. We will trust children to manage their own eating. The amount the child eats may vary from day to day. Children may pick and choose what to eat from the food provided. Children may eat as little or as much as they want. Food will not be used as a reward or withheld as punishment.

**Rest Time:** Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes. DSECC uses infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the U.S. Consumer Protection Safety Commission such as sleep sacks. Pillows, blankets, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in rest equipment for infants younger than 12 months. Infants will not be left to sleep in bouncers, reclined sleepers or in a propped position on the floor and will be immediately moved to a crib in the event that they fall asleep in those positions.

After lunch, all children enrolled in full day programs who are over 12 months old participate in a quiet rest time. Children who show signs of sleepiness will be encouraged to sleep. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities. All children will be toileted, changed or checked after nap time and before other activities begin.

School age children, although not required, will be provided an opportunity for a rest period if the child desires. Quiet activities will be provided if a rest period is requested.

**Departure:** We close at 5:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out both from the check in station and the classroom, and leave by closing time. Pre-K Counts closes at 3:00pm. Children may not stay late unless they are enrolled in wrap care. Only authorized adults may pick up children from DSECC. (See the Authorized and Unauthorized pick-up policy.)

# The Summer

**Summer Calendar:** The summer months are included in the calendar provided to families who enroll during the school year. Families who enroll at DSECC for the summer only are provided with a Summer Calendar in their enrollment packet. This calendar lists the first and last days of summer programming, Center wide special activities, holidays, and days the Center is closed. The 2025 summer program runs from June 8, 2026 to August 21, 2026 with summer camp running from June 9 to August 14, 2026. All dates and activities are subject to change. Please carefully read the information sent out in weekly family communication emails. We are closed annually for Independence Day during the summer. Additionally, we may be closed for one or more days at the end of the summer before the school year program begins for training and set up. (See this year's calendar for Inservice days)

## Hours of Operation:

Childcare, preschool and school age care services are provided from 7:00AM to 5:30PM Monday through Friday.

**Admission and Enrollment:** Children who are enrolled in year-round programs do not need to re-enroll for the summer, however updated paperwork may be requested by the student enrollment coordinator to ensure DHS regulations are met.

Students enrolled in school year programs will set up a summer enrollment meeting with the Student Enrollment Coordinator prior to the school year's end. (See Admission and Enrollment under The School Year for a description of the process.)

Children are admitted to DSECC without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided. (See our inclusion policy for more information)

**Summer Placement Hold:** Families who do not need care for their children over the summer can hold their place in Infant, toddler, and preschool programs by paying a weekly hold fee equal to one fifth of the weekly fee they expect to pay in the next school year. This fee is non-refundable in the event that the family decides not to return. There is no hold fee for programs that do not run during the summer such as Pre-K Counts and Before and After School Care for elementary students.

**Tuition, Fees, and Credits:** Tuition and fees are continuous from the school year through the following summer for all childcare programs. Families with children in preschool programs may need to update their tuition agreements as not all programs or funding is the same between the school year and summer. Summer camp for school age children is a separate contract from the school year. Unused Free Day Credits continue to be available to families continuing with care. No Free Day Credits are available for summer only enrolments. Please see this section under The School Year for more details. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact Angie, [angie@diamondstreet.org](mailto:angie@diamondstreet.org).

**Scholarships:** Some scholarships extend beyond the school year to cover children for the summer months, however not all scholarships do. Please refer to your award letter for details on the amounts and time limits of your scholarship.

**Payments:** Please see this section under The School Year

**Introduction and Transition:** Families who are new to our program for the summer will schedule an enrollment meeting and an optional getting-to-know-you meeting as described in the school year section. Children who are transitioning from one classroom to another will visit the new space and join them for a few activities the week prior to their transition. Infant, toddler and preschool summer programming begins on the Monday following the last day of school for the Ephrata Area School District. Summer camp begins on the Tuesday. We will be closed for car on days between the last day of school and the following Monday to prepare for the summer. Please see this year's school year calendar for exact dates.

**Attendance:** If your child is going to be absent or arrive significantly later than their normal arrival time, please notify us by calling 717 859 4272, messaging via the ProCare app or emailing the Enrollment Coordinator. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

Summer camp students sign up for specific weeks during their enrollment appointment and may not attend on weeks they have chosen not to sign up for. **Changes to the schedule require two weeks' notice** and are subject to availability as determined by the Student Enrollment Coordinator. Full payment is required for all weeks indicated on the enrollment agreement.

**Emergency Closing:** Please see this section under The School Year

**Withdraw of Student/Termination of Services:** Children may be withdrawn at any time with written notification. Two weeks' notice or two weeks of tuition is required. DSECC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate services provided to a child based on the occurrence of events such as lack of cooperation by the families with established rules or procedures or if the center cannot guarantee the safety of the child, other children or staff. For more information see the Suspension/Expulsion Policy.

DSECC reserves the right to terminate services to a child based on the occurrence of certain events such as a lack of cooperation from the family regarding established rules or procedures or non-payment of tuition and fees.

**Curriculum and Learning Environment:** Our infant, toddler and preschool classrooms will continue to use the Creative Curriculum throughout the summer. The structure of the programs and learning environment remain largely the same, though classes tend to be smaller allowing for more focused attention on the needs of the enrolled students. Classes also include a greater number and variety of outdoor lessons and experiences than are possible during the school year.

**Assessment and Developmental Screening:** DSECC continues to assess and screen development to ensure that the needs of all children are met throughout the year. Children new to our program, regardless of when they join, are screened at 45 days. (See school year assessment and developmental screening for more information)

## **A Summer Day:**

**What to Bring:** In addition to items needed during the school year (see Your Child's Day), students will also need to bring a swimsuit and towel for water play. Swimwear should have full torso coverage for sun protection purposes for both boys and girls. If a child does not have a full coverage suit, a t-shirt may be worn over the suit to prevent sunburn. Please remember to update your child's spare clothing for the season.

**Arrival:** We open at 7:00 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in to the Center at the sign in station by the main entrance **and** the classroom.

**Schedule and Activities:** Individual classroom teachers will provide each family with a calendar of events, curriculum topics and activities that are scheduled throughout the summer. Take advantage of the information provided to engage in conversation with your child about what they are learning and experiencing throughout their day. Summer activities may include water play, bike day and field trips.

**Meals:** At mealtime children's plates are pre-portioned and each child is given every menu item unless a substitute is required (see nutrition policy). Children and teachers sit and eat together as mealtimes are an important social learning experience. Teachers model appropriate table manners and encourage children to become self-sufficient and use appropriate table manners as well. Our goal is to provide children with a well-balanced, tasty meal in an atmosphere where they will want to try all the foods we offer. Children are not required to try everything or "clean their plate". Seconds will be offered to everyone until a food item is gone.

We will trust children to manage their own eating. The amount the child eats may vary from day to day. Children may pick and choose what to eat from the food provided. Children may eat as little or as much as they want. Children will be encouraged to try everything but not required to do so. Food will not be used as a reward or withheld as punishment.

**Rest Time:** Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes. DSECC uses infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the U.S. Consumer Protection Safety Commission such as sleep sacks. Pillows, blankets, stuffed toys and other soft items are not allowed in rest equipment for infants younger than 12 months. Infants will not be left to sleep in bouncers, reclined sleepers or in a propped position on the floor and will be immediately moved to a crib in the event that they fall asleep in those positions.

After lunch, all children enrolled in full day programs who are over 12 months old participate in a quiet rest time. Children who show signs of sleepiness will be encouraged to sleep, are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities. All children will be toileted, changed or checked after nap time and before other activities begin.

School age children, although not required, will be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. The short rest period will include quiet activities.

**Departure:** We close at 5:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out both from the check in station and the classroom, and leave by closing time. Children may not stay late unless they are enrolled in wrap care. Only authorized adults may pick up children from DSECC. (See Authorized and Unauthorized pick up policy)



# Communication and Family Participation

**Definition of Family:** Families are all different and consist of a group of people who love and care about each other. Children are part of families who love and care about them. DSECC defines family as the people responsible for the primary care and wellbeing of a child.

Individuals included in family communications will be designated by the person who completes the childcare application and enrollment paperwork. Parents and guardians have the right to access their child within our program at all times unless there is a court order provided to the Center indicating otherwise. Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody.

We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

**Family Activities:** Each family is their child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program by visiting children's classrooms, participating in events, and providing feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

**Center/Family Events:** We have several events throughout the year that bring our community together. These activities occur during open hours on weekdays. Watch for the announcements about how you can participate.

August: Back to School Open House  
September: Groovy with Grands  
October: Harvest Celebration  
November: Thanksgiving Lunch  
Scholastic Book Fair Varies  
December: Christmas Caroling

January: Snow Day  
February: Valentine Parties  
March: Peace week/Friendship Concert  
April: Earth Day  
May: Teacher Appreciation  
June: Graduation

**Classroom Activities:** Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities. Watch your classroom newsletter for details about how to participate.

Chaperone Field Trips  
Volunteer in the classroom  
Serve as a parent representative  
Family Teacher Conferences

Volunteer to help at Center events  
Donate requested items  
Welcome new families  
Complete surveys

**Family/Parent Workshops:** Our menu of family workshops changes annually and occur on Thursday evenings. Below is a list of workshops we typically offer. See the monthly calendar for exact dates and watch for announcements about topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics and base our selection each year on family feedback.

Positive guidance and loving discipline  
Toilet training  
Safety in the home  
Nutrition and exercise for small bodies  
Brain development

Supporting your child in times of stress  
Food allergies  
Kindergarten Readiness  
Warning signs for developmental delays  
Value of reading to your child

**Major Events:** Twice per year we hold a large concert event for the whole family. The children learn and practice songs to sing in front of an audience of family and community members.

- Second Sunday in December: Akron Mennonite Church hosts DSECC Children's choir
- March: Friendship Concert

**Family Information Meetings:** Twice per year we hold virtual information meetings for families. These meetings are to discuss ongoing program and event information and updates as well as to address any concerns families may have. See the annual calendar for exact dates and times. The agenda will be set based on family feedback.

**Communication methods:** DSECC teachers and leadership value mutual communication with families. Casual conversations between families and staff at drop-off and pick up are important but may lack completeness due to time constraints as staff continue to care for the other children in their class. If you are in need of a one-on-one conversation with your child's teachers or Center leadership, please schedule an appointment. We would be happy to chat with you over the phone, via Zoom or in person.

**Daily Communications:** Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Information pertaining to your child's day will be sent through the ProCare Engage App.

**Communication Folders:** Many classrooms have a Communication Folder located near their main classroom entrance door. Please check your child's folder daily for items that need to be taken home.

**Bulletin Boards:** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, classroom learning experiences/agendas, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

**Newsletters:** Weekly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters will be sent via email. Monthly Center newsletters will highlight big center wide events and give a recap of the previous month including pictures. Classrooms also provide monthly newsletters focused on learning topics and special events within their classroom.

**Email:** We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters, and general updates. Every family must provide at least one email address for billing purposes.

**Parent Tool Kit:** Our website has a section titled "Parent Tool Kit". Here you can find center information such as our monthly meal menu, a digital copy of the handbook and forms you may need. You will also find community resources to help you in your journey as a family. The Parent Tool Kit is updated frequently so visit often.

**Family Visits:** We encourage visits to our classrooms, volunteering, or participating on a field trip. Volunteer clearances as well as mandated reporter training are required for the safety and protection of our children.

**Family Night:** Family nights are scheduled on a regular basis. These nights include snacks, drinks and fun filled age-appropriate activities for families. Family Nights allow families and children time to share, learn, and have fun. Families have an opportunity to be a part of their child's learning experience and connect with other families.

**Conferences:** Family & teacher conferences occur three times per year. During these conferences, teachers will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns that you may have with the teachers and/or directors.

**Notification of Behavioral Issues:** If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual

needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. When communicating with parents, teachers may not disclose the names of other children involved in incidents. This includes confirming or denying statements made by the children.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. DSECC will work with families for a smooth transition. For more information see our Suspension and Expulsion policy.

**Open Door Policy:** We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit their child's classroom any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times and access to confidential information will be secured. Families will be issued individual door codes that will allow them access during operation hours. Visitors are asked to sign in at the center office.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, please arrange an appointment.

If a family has a grievance about any activity or policy of DSECC they should communicate that to the lead teacher in their child's classroom. If an agreement cannot be reached, the family should consult with the program director or the Executive Director. If there is still not satisfaction, the grievance should be put in writing and given to the Executive Director to forward to the Board of Directors. The Board will respond in writing or in person as the situation warrants. If the family wishes to bypass the Executive Director, they may mail their letter to the Board, care of Akron Mennonite Church, 1311 Diamond Street, Akron, PA 17501.

# Community and Partnerships

**Akron Mennonite Church:** DSECC is grateful for the partnership with the Akron Mennonite Church (AMC). Our partnership allows us to meet the ongoing needs of the community for childcare and early childhood education.

Events and activities sponsored by AMC will primarily be held during DSECC non-operational hours, however from time-to-time AMC will hold events and activities during the Center's operational hours. Both organizations are committed to the safety and well-being of the children in our program. To that end, care will be taken to keep the those attending the AMC events and activities separate from the childcare spaces. AMC and DSECC staff will be strategically positioned to supervise all people coming and going near the childcare space. Doors will remain locked when unattended and barriers will be set up to prohibit movement between spaces. Guests and volunteers who have not been cleared to access DSECC will be accompanied by AMC staff members at all times.

**Akron Volunteer Fire Company, Station 12:** AVFC Station 12 serves DSECC through emergency response services and fire safety education. We have the privilege of their yearly visits to help educate the children about what to do to stay safe from the dangers of fire. Our staff are also taught on a yearly basis about keeping our children safe. Station 12 serves as our first evacuation point in the event of an emergency, and while we have never had to take them up on this generous offer, we know that if the time ever came, we would be very well cared for during our visit. DSECC loves our emergency responders!

**West Earl Police Department:** The officers of the West Earl Police Department help keep us safe. West Earl PD responds to calls from DSECC and helps us navigate questions around school safety. We are grateful for the help to evaluate our building and develop a safety plan that allows us to use our facilities safely in a shared environment.

**Ephrata Area School District (EASD):** DSECC partners with the EASD to help ensure high quality early childhood education reaches as many families in the school district as possible. DSECC will share information about programs for families with young children throughout the year as well as host EASD professionals for information sessions regarding transition to kindergarten and other activities that may be of interest.

**Volunteers:** At DSECC we love our volunteers. AMC members, community members and families all have opportunities to join us in our mission to bring high quality opportunities for learning and growth to all ages of children in our care. Volunteers can help directly with children through story time, bible lessons, singing songs, sharing a talent with summer camp, staffing the book fair and chaperoning fieldtrips. Other volunteers help out behind the scenes raising funding, caring for our campus, fixing things that break and helping out on reset days. Our Board of Directors are also volunteers who give a significant amount of time to ensuring that DSECC can continue to operate and fulfill its mission for many years to come. We are grateful to all who have contributed time and talent to our mission. To become involved, reach out to Bethany, at [bethany@diamondstreet.org](mailto:bethany@diamondstreet.org). Please note that per DHS regulations, some volunteers may need to meet additional clearance requirements.

**Donors:** Childcare is expensive and families with young children sometimes need help to make ends meet. At DSECC we seek to ensure that all families can access the highest quality of childcare and early childhood available. Our donors make this possible by allowing us to keep our prices low and supplement tuition costs with scholarships for qualifying families. DSECC would not exist without the generous financial contributions of our community members, area organizations and local businesses. Thank you!

**Commitment to Local Businesses:** DSECC commits to seeking supplies and material needs from local sources whenever possible. While keeping costs low is a high priority, we also want to ensure that we are supporting local, ethical organizations and businesses through our consumption practices. For a list of current business partnerships please visit our website, [diamondstreet.org](http://diamondstreet.org).

# School Policy and Guidelines

(Alphabetical Order)

The policies and guidelines implemented at Diamond Street Early Childhood Center are based on the licensing requirements and regulations through the PA Department of Human Services, the PA Keys STARS standards and the best practices compiled in *Caring For Our Children (Third Edition)*, a comprehensive childcare guidebook distributed by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education.

**Allergy Prevention Policy:** Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classroom and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

**Authorized and Unauthorized Pick-Up Policy:** Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In an emergency, release may be requested by phone using the following steps:

- Parent/guardian calls the center at 717 859 4272 to make the request.
- The administrator or teacher who answers the phone will explain that they must call back on the parent/guardian's phone number listed on the emergency paperwork to verify your identity.
- The administrator or teacher will immediately call back using the number listed on the emergency paperwork.
- The parent/guardian will give the full name of the person permitted to pick up their child along with that person's phone number and address.
- At release, the teacher will check the person's photo ID to ensure that the name and address matches the information provided by the parent/guardian.

To safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after one hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency and the police as appropriate.

**Celebrations Policy:** Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, and staff at our center as well as the community around us.

At DSECC, we celebrate holidays including Christmas and Easter as well as Thanksgiving, Fall Harvest, Valentines Day and Birthdays. For each celebration, the classroom teacher will create a sign-up sheet with designated items requested. Families are welcome to sign up to bring one

of the requested items. We ask that you do not deviate from the list to ensure the health and safety of all students, including those with food limitations and allergies.

For birthday celebrations, we prefer that you provide a non-food treat if you wish to bring something in to share with the class. If a food item is provided, it should be a pre-packaged item, sealed and contain an ingredient list. Please provide enough for all children in the class.

**Child Health Assessment Policy:** Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before but must be received no later than [30] days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program. The form may be found in the parent tool kit on our website, [www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org) or in the main office.

**Immunizations:** Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). Pennsylvania state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All teachers and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**Exemptions:** Exemptions for immunizations must be provided in writing. Families may exempt their child from required immunizations due to religious or philosophical objections by handwriting a note stating their objection. The note must include the child's full name, birth date, date written description of objection and the printed name and signature of the parent/guardian. Medical exemptions may be typed and must include a signature from a primary care doctor or physician. The exemption note for the flu shot must be provided annually.

**Child Abuse Policy:** We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to Childline if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

**Confidentiality Policy:** Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children in our program are confidential. Records may be sent to other educational institutions at the request of the family or provided to the family at a time of transition.

If families have a concern regarding their child, they should set up an appointment to speak directly to the lead teacher in their child's classroom. In compliance with confidentiality laws, staff will not discuss issues surrounding children with anyone other than their parent or legal guardian, unless expressed written consent is granted by the parent or legal guardian. Only staff who *need to know* in order to provide care for a child will be provided with information regarding a child.



**Dangerous Weapons:** DSECC prohibits the possession of firearms or any other lethal weapon on organization property and property in use by DSECC through rental and shared space agreements, including the DSECC van, or in a vehicle being used for DSECC business. This policy applies to employees, visitors, and program participants including those who are licensed to carry a weapon, exempting on duty law enforcement officers in the course of official business. Possession of a weapon on DSECC property will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, termination of a care contract or an end to a volunteer relationship.

**Discipline and Challenging Behavior Policy:** Children are guided to treat everyone with self-control and kindness. Each student at **DSECC** has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly environment.
- Be treated with respect.
- Receive the help and support of caring adults.

At DSECC behavior management involves teaching and modeling good character and self-control so that children will make appropriate choices. To accomplish this, the teachers will use positive guidance (redirection) and the establishment of developmentally appropriate boundaries. Teachers will encourage children to be fair, respect property, respect other people and learn to be responsible for their actions. Children will be instructed to be safe, helpful and kind.

Aggressive behavior (causing or potential to cause harm to self, others, or property) is not acceptable. Teachers will be proactive in the intervention that is necessary to defuse situations by redirecting the children involved. Teachers will intervene immediately when a situation develops that endangers children or others. Teachers will model or provide positive alternatives rather than just saying “no”. Acceptable techniques include separating the children, providing comfort and attention to victims, providing calming activities such as controlled breathing, roleplaying difficult situations and helping the children find words to express their feelings. If these techniques do not show the necessary improvement for a child to continue participating in the lesson plans for that day, families may be called to pick up the child.

**Biting:** Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once. When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting. Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter’s family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

**Elopement:** If a child elopes from the class but is not lost from sight, the family will be notified once the situation is resolved unless the child is not returned to safety within 5 minutes, at which point both the family and police will be called. Children who elope and are lost from sight will immediately be searched by all available staff members and the family and the police will be notified immediately. Special attention will be paid to children who have a history of elopement to ensure they are unable to access unsafe areas of the building or leave the building without the company of staff or family members.

**Aggression:** If a child hits, kicks, pinches or throws objects with the apparent intent to cause injury to others, a teacher will immediately intervene to ensure the injured child is comforted and safe. Likewise, threats of violence, use of profanity and bullying are considered aggression. The child that has caused the injury will be reminded of the clear boundaries and helped to find a different way to communicate needs and wants or to leave an uncomfortable situation. Teachers will use “in the moment” opportunities to help children understand how their actions affect both themselves and others. Appropriate consequences will be used when children are

unable to handle themselves or property safely. Teachers will show love and compassion for all children in distress regardless of “why” the child is upset and wait until learning readiness returns before reinforcing expectations.

DSECC strives to offer consistency between home and school settings, however teachers WILL NOT use physical punishment or verbal abuse, as these approaches encourage children to respond in kind, and ultimately fail to develop the self-regulation necessary for a child to behave appropriately within a classroom setting. Likewise, physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. In rare instances when we need to ensure a child’s safety or that of others, we may gently hold a child for as long as necessary to ensure everyone is unharmed. We may also prevent a child from leaving a safe space such as the classroom, building or playground through the use of child-safe gates.

**Electronic Media:** Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use but from time-to-time, we may use a television show without advertisements as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator or play a recording of a book being read as a way to unwind after a particularly energetic lesson. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child with a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than 20 minutes per week per child.

OCDEL rules prohibit any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos, and computers. We are committed to following this rule by intentionally avoiding all use of screens in our infant and young toddler classrooms except for staff use as communication and tracking devices.

During summer camp or unexpected days off from school (such as snow days) students in kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade may occasionally be given the choice of using electronic media brought from home such as handheld games or cell phones during a designated time of day. Devices from home will not be shared with other students, but students may use classroom tables in the event an electronic use time is scheduled. Both the students and their parents must sign off on a statement indicating that students must follow the rules or lose this privilege.

Tables are available for school age children to use for homework or other educational purposes such as looking up answers to questions, following step by step instructional videos or as part of a planned lesson. No photos or videos may be recorded on any device brought from home or a classroom device to maintain confidentiality and ensure we are following photo/video permissions. Devices will be taken away without warning and be returned to the parents if safety rules are not followed.

**Emergency Preparedness:** DSECC staff are required to participate in fire safety, emergency operations procedures, and pediatric first aid/CPR training in regulation with OCDEL, DHS, and STARS guidelines. DSECC cooperates with the local chapter of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to emergency situations. Information pertaining to the procedures of an emergency are listed below in the parent letter:

To the Parents/Guardians of children who attend Diamond Street Early Childhood Center- This letter is to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of the children attending DSECC. Our emergency plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency the following protective actions will take place:

**Immediate evacuation:** In case of fire or other necessary needs for evacuation, students are evacuated to a safe area on the ground of the facility out of way of emergency vehicles and responders.

**Immediate shelter:** If sudden occurrences such as weather or hazardous material related conditions, students will be taken to places that are designated as safe shelter spaces within the facility.

**Evacuation:** If there is a danger or necessary reason to relocate off premises due to an emergency children and staff will be brought to the following predetermined safe facilities:

In Community: Volunteer Fire Company of Akron, 1229 Main St. Akron PA. 17501

Outside Akron Community: If we needed to evacuate outside of the Akron area the following locations would be where we would relocate staff and children.

A. St. Paul's Christian Child Care: 200 W. Orange St, Lititz PA 17543 (7.6 miles)

B. Sonshine Child Development Center: 1060 E. Newport Rd, Lititz PA 17543 (5.5 miles)

Emergency transportation will be provided by the DSECC van, and staff's personal vehicles. All staff must accompany and remain with children within the transportation of children.

In an emergency, please do not call the facility. We need those lines open for emergency personnel to communicate and relay information. We will contact families when we feel that the situation is resolved, or it is considered safe for child pick-up.

Emergency information will be shared via email, DSECC Facebook page if appropriate and Procure Engage App. Check these sources regularly during an emergency for the most up to date information regarding the situation and circumstances.

Children will be released only to your authorized pick-up list. No additional authorizations can be arranged in an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

**Continuity of Operation:** DSECC will make every possible effort to continue care for all enrolled families at our facility once an emergency has passed. If resuming operations in our facility is not possible, we will make every possible effort to open operations in a temporary space until our facility is available.

We will continue to communicate with families using email and the Procure app regarding all changes and updates during and after the emergency. Tuition will continue to be processed for all operational days. Depending on the circumstances of the emergency, credits will be determined on a case by case basis.

Confidential student and staff information is maintained in written and electronic form and stored in multiple locked locations require keyed or password protected access. Staff will continue to be paid for their work. Payroll systems are available through remote access.

**Emergency Transportation Policy:** In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A staff member will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives. If immediate evacuation of the Center is necessary, children will be transported to the Akron Volunteer Fire Company using emergency evacuation cribs, strollers and by walking. If further transportation is required and families are unable to be reached, DSECC will use the Center van and staff's private vehicles as a last resort.

**Fire Safety Policy:** Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, flashing lights, emergency shut-off valves (kitchen), and emergency evacuation cribs. Our fire evacuation plan is practiced with the children and staff on a monthly basis. Drills are conducted during all parts of the day and classrooms practice using varied evacuation routes. Signs will be posted to notify families of a fire drill in progress and a message sent home to let you know a drill was conducted. All staff are trained in proper fire safety procedures upon initial hire and yearly during the month of October.

Children are taught about Fire Safety during the month of October by the Akron Volunteer Fire Company.

**Illness and Communicable Diseases Policy:** We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children and our staff; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that result in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that pose a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100.4°F or higher)
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/pull-up or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Diagnosis of a communicable disease.

**Children who have been ill may return when:**

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

**Communicable Disease:** When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)

- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis

**Inclusion and Diversity Policy:** Multiculturalism and diversity are vital for all children. It sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We use books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it. Children will learn that there are many different types of families, communities and cultures and that all of these differences are good as long as people are treating each other with kindness.

Diamond Street Early Childhood Center believes that children from all backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, religions, traditions and of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their families' cultural preferences, individual capabilities, and physical needs.

Children who are learning English as a second language will be supported through use of their home language when possible, along with pictures, gestures and signs. Time will be spent to support the child's individual language learning needs and ensure communication between the teaching staff and family are adequate.

When questions about diverse families arise, all children will be treated with respect and questions will be answered simply, honestly and on a developmentally appropriate level.

If your child has an identified special need, we ask that you let us know at the time of enrollment.

Please provide a copy of the child's IEP or IFSP if one has been completed. This will help us adapt the classroom routines, interactions and learning experiences to meet your child's needs. Diamond Street will work with families and outside agencies to develop a plan for each child's success.

The following steps will be used if diverse needs are identified after enrollment:

1. Staff and Parents will work to clearly identify needs that could negatively impact the child's progress or disrupt the classroom learning.
2. The leadership team will alert the child's family to the problem and level of severity.
3. Staff will document the frequency, length and intensity of the behavior or the special need daily.
4. Staff and the family will complete a developmental checklist of the child, i.e., Ages and Stages Questionnaire to help identify strengths and areas for growth.
5. A meeting will be held to review the documentation, developmental checklists, and observations.
6. With the primary guardian's written permission, Diamond Street will contact Early Childhood Mental Health, Intermediate Unit 13 or Early Intervention as appropriate for the situation. Families may choose to reach out on their own.
7. The caseworker and team will develop a plan for the child to be incorporated into the classroom environment.
8. Staff will follow the plan and document the child's progress and if successful will continue to follow the plan.
9. If the plan is unsuccessful, the center will request the family seek further evaluations through the appropriate agency. If further evaluations are refused the suspension/expulsion policy will be considered.
10. Diamond Street will continue to work with the family to meet the child's needs if the family continues to follow the plan and pursue any recommendations from the agency.

**Injury Policy:** Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of an injury to a child's head, a call will be placed to the primary guardians and a follow-up message sent via Procure. The child will be watched for signs of concussion and families notified if symptoms arise.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, center staff will call 911. If determined necessary by an EMT, unless otherwise specified by the parents in advance, the child will be taken to the Ephrata Community Hospital by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

DSECC maintains accident and injury insurance that will cover medical care children may need as a result of an injury sustained while in care. Families will be provided with the necessary paperwork to submit a claim which must be filed within 90 days of the injury. DSECC cannot file on behalf of the child or family.

**Medication Policy:** All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- **Prescription medications** require a completed medical log signed by the child's guardian and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.
- **Non-prescription medications** require a completed medication log signed by the child's guardian. The medication log must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.
- **Non-prescription topical ointments** (e.g., diaper cream, sunscreen and insect repellent) require authorization signed by the guardian. A signature on our enrollment form under this section is sufficient. All ointments must be in their original container and labeled with the child's name.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** At DSECC equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

In Accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, DSECC ensures that all persons with limited English proficiency will have meaningful and equal access to services and benefits. These services will include, but are not limited to, free language assistance services when an interpreter is needed.

Anyone who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with:

Diamond Street Early Learning Center  
1311 Diamond Street, Suite A  
Akron, PA 17501

Department of Human Services  
Bureau of Equal Opportunity  
Room 223, Health and Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

US Dept. of Health & Human Services  
Office for Civil Rights  
Suite 372, Public Ledger Bldg.  
150 S Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Pennsylvania Human Relations  
Commission  
Harrisburg Regional Office  
1101 S. Front St., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17104

**Nutrition Policy:** We request that you do not bring food from home into our center. If your child has dietary restrictions or nutritional needs that cannot be met by our food program, a doctor's note must be provided for you to bring meals and snacks.

Food prepared at the center will be properly planned, prepared, and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service. Milk, and milk substitutes will be discarded after 2 hours of unrefrigerated time. Breast milk and formula will be discarded 1 hour after preparation. Enrolled children will receive breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack if present at designated times. If a child indicates that they are hungry outside of these times, accommodation will be made to meet their needs. All food provided by the Center is free to families.

**Food Allergy:** If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually. Parents may be responsible for some substitutes. Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy must have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

**Infant feedings:** DSECC will follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed "on cue" to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly).
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed.
- Breast milk and prepared formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.

**Children 12 months and older:** DSECC will follow these procedures:

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted or are altered to make them safe.
- Bottles are not permitted outside of the infant classrooms.



- All children must be seated to eat or drink.

**School Aged Participants:** DSECC will follow these procedures:

- Before and after school childcare participants will be offered a meal at each session. If your child will be arriving before 8:00 AM, they will be served breakfast. After school they will receive a snack.
- Children are not permitted to eat snacks from home unless a doctor's note for special dietary needs is on file.

**USDA Statement of nondiscrimination:** In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (833) 620-1071, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to:

1. **mail:**  
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA  
1320 Braddock Place, Room 334  
Alexandria, VA 22314; or
2. **fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**  
[FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov](mailto:FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov)  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Open Door Policy:** We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit their child's classroom any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times and access to confidential information will be secured. Families will be issued individual door codes that will allow them access during operation hours. Visitors are asked to sign in at the center office.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, please arrange an appointment.

If a family has a grievance about any activity or policy of DSECC they should communicate that to the lead teacher in their child's classroom. If an agreement cannot be reached, the family should consult with the program director or the Executive Director. If there is still not satisfaction, the grievance should be put in writing and given to the Executive Director to forward to the Board of Directors. The Board will respond in writing or in person as the situation

warrants. If the family wishes to bypass the Executive Director, they may mail their letter to the Board, care of Akron Mennonite Church, 1311 Diamond Street, Akron, PA 17501.

**Outdoor Play:** DSESS is committed to ensuring all our students experience regular outdoor time as part of their education. A minimum of 1 hour per day will be scheduled as outdoor time for infants and toddlers. Preschool will schedule a minimum of 2 hours per day outdoors. Outdoor activities will include a mix of physical activity including walks, explorative play, and structured lessons.

Families are expected to provide appropriate protective clothing for the anticipated weather conditions so their children can go outside daily.

Outdoor play will not occur for infants and toddlers if the outside temperature is greater than 90°F or less than 24°F. Ages 3 and up will not play outside if the temperature is above 90°F or less than 15°F. Additionally, outdoor play will be cancelled if the air quality rating indicates that it is harmful for sensitive groups such as young children or if high wind warnings are in place. The “feels like” temperature will be considered for extremes that may be harmful to children.

Drinking water and shade will be provided any time children are outside for longer than 15 minutes.

**Outings and Field Trips:** Conditions permitting; we are committed to providing a minimum of one scheduled outdoor experience of supervised play and/or walking trips around the nature preserve or the neighborhood for all children. Most days, children will receive up to 3 hours of outdoor time that will include structured activities and lessons. This time may also include walking trips. The children are supervised and accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment form. Families will be notified every time the class leaves our campus. Appropriate first aid and emergency readiness equipment will be taken on all off-campus trips.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child’s family. If you would like to join your child on the trip, volunteer child abuse and state criminal clearances must be submitted to the office prior to the trip.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals, fancy shoes with high heels, and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking long distances and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities. Proper restraint systems (seat belts and boosters when appropriate) are critically important during travel to/from DSECC as well as during field trips. All field trips will be taken using an insured school bus service or the DSECC van.

**Parking Lot Safety Policy:** To ensure that families, children and staff are safe, this policy will be enforced by frequent West Earl Police department patrols during regular drop-off and pick up time.

All persons who have need to be in the parking lot or driving lanes must exercise caution when operating a vehicle or on foot. Drivers whose business is with DSECC, must keep left when pulling into the parking lot and drive no more than 10mph. Drive slowly and attentively as children are unpredictable. The first 20 parking spots are reserved for families and guests of DSECC. Staff must park past these spots, between the kitchen entrance and the playground.

- Never leave any child without adult supervision.
- Always hold your child’s hand while escorting them across the parking lot or driving lanes.

- Exit the vehicle first, then allow your child to exit.
- Do not leave any vehicle running unattended.

Respect both permanent and temporary signs, cones, and traffic control indicators. If the large cones are up, do not drive into the overflow lot next to the playground.

**Personal Belongings:** DSECC staff will do what they can to help children keep track of their belongings, but do not accept responsibility for lost, damaged or stolen items. Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. Each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Cubbies are located in different areas depending on the classroom and may be in the form of a cabinet attached to the wall, a bin on a shelf or a small laundry basket depending on the age of the children. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center. You can look for lost items and bring found items to the lost-and-found Box located at the check in/out station.

**Photography and Video:** Occasionally, photos and videos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center, on our website or in letters to our community. Families are asked to designate how they would like their child's photo used at the time of enrollment. Categories include "in the center", "center events", "community outreach" and "social media". One identifying photo will be taken of each child for security purposes and used in our Procure app to ensure Name to Face supervision accuracy. If a special situation arises, we will reach out to families prior to the use of photographs.

Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for community outreach or on social media. Group photos that include children who do not have permission to be shared will be altered to disguise the identity of the child. (Such as placing a sticker over their face or other identifying features)

**Physical Activity:** At DSECC we are committed to the health of each child in our care. To ensure children have adequate opportunities to develop gross motor skills, each classroom will schedule a minimum of 60 minutes of large muscle physical activity opportunities during each day. Included in this 60 minutes will be access to short periods of physical activity opportunities in the classroom throughout the day.

Classrooms will incorporate two outdoor sessions into their daily schedules that will include time for free play, teacher lead physical activities and walks (see "outings and field trips"). Some small motor nature-based lessons may also take place during this time on occasion. If weather does not permit time outdoors, classrooms will use our Big Room for gross motor physical activity including free play and teacher led activities.

Infants will be provided with tummy time activities scheduled according to their individual needs as well as opportunities to practice rolling, scooting, crawling, and pulling up as they grow and develop mobility. Time spent in bouncers, jumpers, exercisers, and swings will be limited to times when it is necessary to keep the children safe in order to meet the feeding and diapering needs of other infants.

To meet the ongoing need to expend energy and develop gross motor confidence, each classroom will have a center devoted to large muscle movement including child sized exercise toys, toddler gyms or self-guided yoga. Teachers will also incorporate physical activity into their day through movement with music, group stretching and get up and go moments.

**Respectful Behavior Policy:** DSECC staff will treat all children, families, visitors, and volunteers with respect and dignity. In return, all families, visitors, and volunteers will treat staff and each other with respect and dignity. DSECC will not tolerate violence or threats of violence. If any individual acts in a violent way, appropriate action will be taken, including calling police to intervene. Unacceptable behavior will result in action that can include banning of an individual from DSECC property and property in use by DSECC or the end of a care contract, employment, or volunteer relationship.

To protect the children enrolled in our programs and to provide a supportive work environment for our staff, no loitering is permitted. Individuals are expected to leave the Center and AMC campus when they do not have an active and appropriate reason to be on DSECC property or on property in use by DSECC.

Any individual experiencing violence or threats of violence should report these instances to the Executive Director and call 911 if applicable. We will not tolerate retaliation against any individual who reports an act or threat of violence, and all reported instances will be investigated.

**Right to Refuse Child Release:** We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs, alcohol or is physically and emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

**Safe Clothing Policy:** Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including painting, outdoor play, sand, weather conditions, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution. Another concern is choking hazards for children under age 3 who should not wear any items on their clothing (such as pins, charms or jibbitz) or in their hair (such as beads) that could present a choking hazard if it fell off.

Teachers may remove them if present.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for DSECC and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities. Please send your child to the center in closed toed shoes that will stay on your child's foot during active play. Shoes should not have smooth slippery soles (ex. dress-up shoes) to prevent slipping. Sneakers are best.

**Shaken Baby Syndrome:** Abusive head trauma (also referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome) occurs in infants and young children, whose neck muscles are not well developed and whose heads are larger relative to their bodies. As a result, they are especially susceptible to head trauma caused by any type of forceful or sudden shaking with or without blunt impact. Damage can occur in as little as five seconds.

The signs and symptoms of abusive head trauma include bruises on or around the head and neck, lack of appetite, vomiting, difficulty sucking or swallowing, lack of smiling or vocalizing, rigidity and inability to lift the head, difficulty staying awake, altered consciousness, difficulty breathing (blue color to skin), unequal pupil size and inability to focus eyes or track objects.

Infant crying is normal behavior, which improves as a child ages. Caregivers/teachers will develop proactive strategies to manage stress levels and appropriate responses to a crying child. All staff employed by DSECC will receive approved training on prevention and recognition of abusive head trauma. Teachers will never shake, drop, throw, or push a child into the air or onto/into any surface. Teachers will never strike a child's head, directly or indirectly; doing so is grounds for immediate termination of employment.

If a child presents any of the signs or symptoms of abusive head trauma the following steps will take place, teachers will inform the parent/guardian and the Executive Director. If immediate care is needed, 911 will be called. A report to Childline will also be placed. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse.

**Smoking and Prohibited Substances:** DSECC and the AMC campus are smoke free. The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

**Supervision and Child to Staff Ratios:** Children will be supervised at all times. Staff will be able to **see, hear, assess, and direct** children within their care. All staff receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

Families must remain in visual contact with their children until they transfer supervision to a teacher by signing them in on the classroom clipboard. Families must again maintain visual supervision of their child after signing them out of the classroom.

We maintain, at minimum the following PA State standards for child to staff ratios:

| <b>Age</b>        | <b>Child to Staff</b> | <b>Maximum Group Size</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| ≤ 12 months       | <u>4/1</u>            | <u>8</u>                  |
| 13-24 months      | <u>5/1</u>            | <u>10</u>                 |
| 24-36 months      | <u>6/1</u>            | <u>12</u>                 |
| 3 year-olds       | <u>10/1</u>           | <u>20</u>                 |
| 4 year-olds       | <u>10/1</u>           | <u>20</u>                 |
| 5 year-olds       | <u>12/1</u>           | <u>24</u>                 |
| 6 to 10 year-olds | <u>12/1</u>           | <u>24</u>                 |

The ratio for the youngest child present in a space will apply for the whole group of children. In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. Once the situation has resolved, the family will be contacted and informed. If the child is not located within 3 minutes, the family and the police will be notified. All lapses in supervision will be reported to the OCDEL.

**Suspension/Expulsion:** DSECC will adhere to the recommendations of the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) regarding suspension and expulsion. Before

requesting the temporary or permanent removal of a child, DSECC will follow all steps towards inclusion of students. If these steps are unsuccessful or if the family refuses to pursue evaluations or follow the plans created by the agency conducting the evaluations, DSECC may require the temporary or permanent removal of the child.

If, despite best efforts from both the center and family, the child's needs cannot be met in our care, DSECC will help provide as much assistance as possible in finding an appropriate placement that can meet the child's needs and work with the family for a smooth transition.

***DSECC reserves the right to terminate services to a child based on the occurrence of certain events such as a lack of cooperation from the family regarding established rules or procedures or non-payment of tuition and fees.***

**Toilet Training:** The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns. We will do our best to replicate your toilet training procedures, unless they conflict with our regulatory oversight, to provide consistency across environments.

All children who are in diapers or pull ups will have their diaper or pull up checked a minimum of every 2 hours. Children who are in the process of toilet training will be given the opportunity to use the toilet a minimum of every two hours. All children will be toileted or changed after naptime.

Children must be toilet trained or have an IEP/IFSP indicating a plan for toilet training in order to be a part of our school age programs starting in kindergarten. All children entering our preschool program must show significant progress towards toilet training or have an IET/IFSP indicating a plan for toilet training that is appropriate for the child. Our staff will work with each child by following their toileting plan and arrangements will be made to include all children in activities during summer camp such as swimming. Families will be asked to provide supplies such as pull-ups, or swim diapers appropriate for older children as these sizes are not supplied by the center.

**Toothbrushing policy:** Children 2 years and older will have the opportunity to brush their teeth once every day. A toothbrush holder is hung on the wall in close proximity to the classroom sink. This holder allows toothbrushes to receive air and hang freely without touching one another. The holder will be sanitized weekly. Each toothbrush is labeled with the child's name. No toothpaste will be used. A staff member will rinse the toothbrushes individually in hot water. The sinks will be sanitized after toothbrushing. Staff will wear gloves to assist in toothbrushing when assistance is necessary.

**Toys from Home:** We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-share activity. Please leave all toys in your vehicle as taking toys from your child at the classroom door can cause additional difficulty in transition.

Comfort items may be brought in for nap time. These should be labeled and stored in your child's plastic bin or cubby. Children's comfort items should be able to fit in their bin or cubby,

anything larger than the bin will be sent home. Please take these items home weekly to wash. Comfort items may only be used during rest/nap times and will not be shared between children. No toys representing weapons, warfare or profanity are permitted.

**Water Play and Swimming:** Supervised children are permitted to engage in water play in indoor sensory tables and outdoors during the summer months. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water play does not spread communicable infectious disease. Children are not permitted to drink the water. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play and will be provided with an alternative activity. Fresh potable water is used. The water is dumped, and the table cleaned after each use. All teachers are trained in water safety per DHS requirements.

School Aged children will be taken to a pool for swimming during summer camp. DSECC will maintain a 1:6 ratio during swimming. DSECC will employ the services of a certified lifeguard to supervise swimmers. Children will be tested for swimming ability by a certified lifeguard before they are permitted in water higher than their shoulders. Children will leave the pool for breaks a minimum of once per hour and be removed from the pool anytime they appear to be fatigued, cold or unwell.

Diamond Street Early Childhood Center  
1311 Diamond Street  
Akron, PA 17501



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# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please complete this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

Name of Parent/Guardian receiving Handbook: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of enrolled children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have received the Diamond Street Early Childhood Center (DSECC) Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the DSECC staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Family Handbook that I do not understand.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Received By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Center Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

